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JCS PASS J-5/CDR S. WRIGHT

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [TU](#)  
SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT  
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2008

#### In Today's Papers

Five More Soldiers Killed in Clashes with PKK  
All papers: Four soldiers were killed in clashes with the PKK in Kavakli, which is located in the southeast province of Hakkari. Helicopters with reinforcements were sent to the region, but one of the helicopters, which was carrying soldiers and Kayseri 1st Commando brigade commander General Omer Faruk Kucuk, crashed due to a technical failure. A soldier died in the crash, bringing the Thursday's military death toll to five. General Kucuk and 15 soldiers were injured slightly in the crash. Mainstream Hurriyet reports that the pro-Kurdish Firat News Agency first reported yesterday that three soldiers were killed in the clashes. However, following the TGS statement on the crashed helicopter and the martyrs, Firat News Agency changed its report and said that the helicopter was "downed by PKK militants." Tabloid Posta reports that 18 PKK terrorists were killed during the operations. Mainstream Sabah notes that the 2nd Army Commander General Necdet Ozel went to Van by a private military plane yesterday and from there, together with Gendarmerie Commander General Yurdaer Olcan, traveled to Hakkari.

Meanwhile, Tercuman and Cumhuriyet report that the military prosecutor's office gave Taraf newspaper a three-day deadline to hand over all their documents related to the Aktutun attack and warned Taraf that if they do not hand over the documents, the relevant documents will be taken by force.

PM Erdogan Extends Support to General Basbug  
Sabah, Hurriyet, Aksam, Tercuman, Milliyet, Cumhuriyet, Turkiye and others: Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan expressed support to Chief of General Staff General Ilker Basbug who harshly criticized the media for their reports that the military had prior knowledge of the October 3rd terrorist attack on the Aktutun military outpost. Mainstream Hurriyet quoted Erdogan as saying "No one has the right to pull the military down. No one should encourage terror. We are standing on the right side and the rest is the others' concern." Mainstream Milliyet says that PM Erdogan "spoke just like General Basbug" and said "everyone, including the press, should act carefully." Cumhuriyet quotes Erdogan saying "The media has the

right to criticize, but there is also the right to respond to criticism. There are ethical rules by which the independent media must abide."

#### Editorial Commentary on Basbug's Response to Criticism of the Military

Nazli Ilıcak wrote in mainstream Sabah: "General Basbug did not respond to Taraf's allegations of negligence in Aktutun. Instead of giving harsh statements and lining up all his force commanders behind him, he should have met with the PM and explained the military's sensitivity to such news. And PM Erdogan, instead of supporting the General's harsh statement, should have talked to the media with his Defense Minister and of course, used milder language than that of Basbug. Yesterday, Taraf presented more documents in relation to the Aktutun attack. There are still many unanswered questions. But this time, the Prime Minister, not the TGS Chief, should speak to the press at a press conference, right after the investigation is completed on the case."

Ihsan Dagi observed in Islamist-oriented Zaman: "The military is not being criticized. Questions about how the military does its job are very healthy. Armies in other democratic countries will respond to such questions. It seems that the military doesn't think this country is run by a democratic regime. The principle of accountability is a requirement in modern administrative structures, particularly in democracies. It will be impossible for the media to speak out at all if those who ask questions about the Aktutun attack are treated as pro-PKK. A strong military is one that excels in its job, and not one that intimidates the people, journalists and

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politicians. An institution that sees criticism as treason is dysfunctional. It must not be forgotten that General Basbug's statement this week reminds us of the protective value of a democratic regime."

Fikret Bila questioned in mainstream Milliyet: "Why did General Basbug, who is known for his calm attitude, use such a strong tone in his statement to the media yesterday? General Basbug always keeps in close contact with the families of the martyrs. As the military's chief commander, he considers every single soldier as his own child and reiterates at every opportunity that 'the commanders are the ones who suffer deeply from each martyr's death. Their pain is almost as acute as that of the martyrs' families.'" General Basbug used a controlled tone in his statement to show everyone that the fight against terrorism is not a game. He also showed the Turkish military's determination to win this fight. He used such a tone to give the right message to certain media organizations in order to show that their slander campaign did not intimidate the military. And finally, using this tone wasn't a tactic to 'black out' the facts of Aktutun. General Basbug promised that he will share the facts with the public when the necessary investigation is completed. People who know General Basbug well know that Basbug will fulfill this promise too."

#### Justice Minister on Detainee's Death by Torture

Media outlets report Justice Minister Mehmet Ali Sahin told the press yesterday the ruling AKP government maintains its policy of "zero tolerance" regarding the torture of detainees at the hands of security officials. Detainee Engin Ceber died from a brain hemorrhage he sustained after being beaten and tortured by policemen and prison guards. Ceber, a leftist activist, was sentenced to serve time in Metris prison in Istanbul for distributing a leftist publication. Professor Gencay Gursoy, head of the Turkish Union of Physicians, said Ceber died from wounds sustained during "a beating with sticks wrapped in fabric." Gursoy said "it seemed the policemen were specially trained on torture methods." Ceber's two friends taken into custody on September 28 along with the activist said they went through the same torture Ceber was subjected to. They said the torturers even took their photos, with policemen sitting on them on the ground "like in Abu Ghraib prison."

Meanwhile, papers report parliament's commission for human rights will set up four sub-committees to inspect prisons and police stations.

## Court Blocks Access to Vatan Website over Islamist Writer's Application

Mainstream Vatan reports a court in Silivri, Istanbul blocked access to its website at the request of Islamist community leader and writer Adnan Oktar due to readers' comments about his community. Oktar, a controversial community leader and strong critic of Darwin's evolution theory, had so far managed to block access to 61 websites through court orders, saying they had defamed him. Oktar is the author of "Atlas of Creation," in which he advocates creationism in the book which had been distributed for free to renowned academics, politicians and institutions around the world earlier this year. Last month a Turkish court barred access to the website of "evolutionist" Oxford professor Richard Dawkins after Oktar complained it had defamed him. Turkish courts have blocked access to more than 800 websites, including YouTube, this year for insulting "Turkishness" or the founder of modern Turkey, Ataturk.

TV News:  
CNN Turk

## Domestic News

- Ergenekon suspect retired general Sener Eruygur, who is being treated in Kocaeli University Hospital for a brain hemorrhage, was

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transferred to a military hospital in Istanbul.

- An IMF delegation headed by IMF's Turkey desk chief Lorenzo Giorgiani is in Istanbul for talks.

- Prime Minister Erdogan will kick off a tour the eastern and southeastern provinces over the weekend.

## International News

- Iran launches military exercises to "demonstrate the might and combat readiness of Iran's Air Force."

- Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki says the "hegemonic" nature of the US economy affected other economies, triggering global financial meltdown.

- Italy begins charter flights to northern Cyprus.  
WILSON